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PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the Application of

Makoto IIDA

Group Art Unit: 1792

Application No.: 10/586,476

Examiner: G. RAO

Filed: July 18, 2006

Docket No.: 128768

For: A METHOD FOR PRODUCING SEMICONDUCTOR WAFERS AND A SYSTEM
FOR DETERMINING A CUT POSITION IN A SEMINCONDUCTOR INGOT

RESPONSE TO RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

In reply to the February 25, 2009 Restriction Requirement, Applicant provisionally elects Group I, claims 9-26, with traverse.

National stage applications filed under 35 U.S.C. §371 are subject to unity of invention practice as set forth in PCT Rule 13, and are not subject to U.S. restriction practice. See MPEP §1893.03(d). PCT Rule 13.1 provides that an "international application shall relate to one invention only or to a group of inventions so linked as to form a single general inventive concept." Further, PCT Rule 13.2 states:

Where a group of inventions is claimed in one and the same international application, the requirement of unity of invention referred to in Rule 13.1 shall be fulfilled only when there is a technical relationship among those inventions involving one or more of the same or corresponding special technical features. The expression "special technical features" shall mean those technical features that define a contribution which each of the claimed inventions, considered as a whole, makes over the prior art.

A lack of unity of invention may be apparent “*a priori*,” that is, before considering the claims in relation to any prior art, or may only become apparent “*a posteriori*,” that is, after taking the prior art into consideration. See MPEP §1850(II), quoting *International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines* (“ISPE”) 10.03. Lack of *a priori* unity of invention only exists if there is no subject matter common to all claims. *Id.* If *a priori* unity of invention exists between the claims, or, in other words, if there is subject matter common to all the claims, a lack of unity of invention may only be established *a posteriori* by showing that the common subject matter does not define a contribution over the prior art. *Id.*

Furthermore, unity of invention only needs to be determined in the first place between independent claims, and not the dependent claims, as stated in ISPE 10.06:

Unity of invention has to be considered in the first place only in relation to the independent claims in an international application and not the dependent claims. By “dependent” claim is meant a claim which contains all the features of one or more other claims and contains a reference, preferably at the beginning, to the other claim or claims and then states the additional features claimed (Rule 6.4).

See also MPEP §1850(II). ISPE 10.07 further provides:

If the independent claims avoid the prior art and satisfy the requirement of unity of invention, no problem of lack of unity arises in respect of any claims that depend on the independent claims. In particular, it does not matter if a dependent claim itself contains a further invention.

See also MPEP §1850(II).

In the present application, Applicant respectfully submits that there is *a priori* unity of invention between independent claims 9 and 27, because there is subject matter common to each of these claims. For example, independent claim 9 recites, in part, “a position at which the oxygen concentration is maximum or minimum...is determined as a cut position,” and independent claim 27 recites, in part, “means for determining a cut position so that the oxygen concentrations at both ends of a block to be obtained by the cutting are maximum and

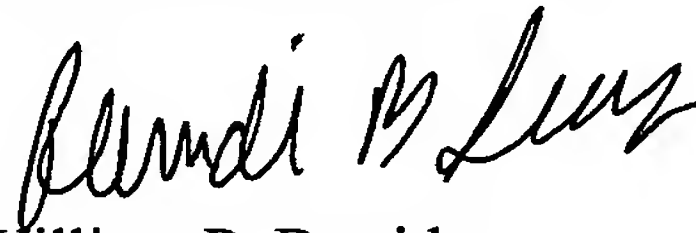
minimum" (emphasis added). Each of claims 9 and 27 recites features relating to determining a cut position related to the oxygen concentrations.

Accordingly, all the claims share common subject matter and, therefore, *a priori* unity of invention exists between all the claims. Thus, for the present application, a lack of unity of invention may only be determined *a posteriori*, or in other words, after a search of the prior art has been conducted and it is established that all the elements of the independent claim are known. *See* ISPE 10.07 and 10.08.

The Office Action does not establish that each and every element of the subject matter that is common to independent claims 9 and 27 is known in the prior art. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that lack of unity of invention has not been established, and thus a restriction requirement based on a lack of unity of invention is improper.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the restriction requirement are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



William P. Berridge
Registration No. 30,024

Randi B. Isaacs
Registration No. 56,046

WPB:BDM/hjr

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 320850
Alexandria, Virginia 22320-4850
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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